

(b) There is a huge gap between demand and supply of Polymer materials in the domestic market and it is envisaged that the total product will be consumed by domestic polymer processors.

(c) Central Institute of Plastics Engineering and Technology (CIPET), Guwahati and Imphal are conducting various training programmes for Entrepreneurship Development and Skill Upgradation Programmes for the direct and indirect employment avenues for the upcoming Assam Gas Cracker Project. The training programmes are sponsored by different Government organizations like Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL), Brahmaputra Cracker and Polymer Limited (BCPL), Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DONER), Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, Financial Institutions like Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), and North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Limited (NEDFI).

(d) Written Test for 60 Graduate Engineering Trainees (GETs)/Executives Trainee (ETs) and 20 experienced Executives have been conducted. Further manpower to be recruited in future will be based on the specific requirements for Construction phase, Pre-Commissioning, Commissioning and Operation and Maintenance phases.

Collaboration with US in agriculture

*494. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

SHRI N.K. SINGH:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government has recently entered into a collaboration with the United States in the field of agriculture;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether US has agreed to provide help in agricultural research work to improve productivity; and

(d) if so, the facts and details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (d) Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) has cooperation with USA under the Indo-US Agriculture Knowledge Initiative, signed on 12.11.2005. Besides this, there is cooperation between DARE/ICAR and some of the American Universities such as Cornell University and Iowa State University in the field of agricultural research.

Use of organic manure

*495. SHRI M. RAMA JOIS: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has taken/is planning to take measures to popularize and increase use of organic manure for agriculture and progressive reduction of the use of chemical

fertilizers, in view of the beneficial aspects of the organic manure and adverse effects of the chemical fertilizers both on the quality of agricultural produce and the fertility of land;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (c) Government has taken measures to popularize organic manure and increase its usage under different schemes of Department of Agriculture and Cooperation such as the National Project on Organic Farming, the National Project for Management of Soil Health and Fertility etc. because of its beneficial impact on soil health.

Though imbalanced and injudicious use of chemical fertilizers has been observed to have affected soil health and productivity in some parts of the country, balanced and judicious use of chemical fertilizers is not known to adversely affect quality of agricultural produce or soil fertility. Keeping in view the imperative of increasing agricultural production, it is not feasible to reduce the use of chemical fertilizers in the country as a whole.

Insurance scheme to protect cash crops farmers

*496. SHRI P. RAJEEVE: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has formulated any plans to extend the insurance scheme under the Agriculture Ministry to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to protect the cash crops, farmers; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Agriculture and Cooperation is implementing two insurance schemes *i.e.* National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) and Pilot Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (WBCIS). Under both the schemes, food, oilseeds and annual commercial/horticultural crops are covered. Plantation and Cash Crops such as tea, coffee, rubber, tobacco are not covered under these schemes. However, Department of Commerce is already implementing Weather (Rainfall) Insurance as a Risk Management Support for Coffee Growers and have formulated a proposal on crop insurance scheme for tea, rubber, tobacco and some spices.

Construction of new station at Nedumbassery

*497. SHRI M.P. ACHUTHAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Government of Kerala has submitted a proposal for construction of a new railway station at Nedumbassery to make better rail connectivity with Nedumbassery Airport, which is one of the fast developing international airports in the western coast of the peninsula; and